ECLECTIC READINGS

ANOTHER FAIRY READER

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ANOTHER FAIRY READER

BY

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ANOTHER FAIRY READER.

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PREFATORY NOTE

THIS book is a little higher in grade than its companion volume, the *Second Fairy Reader*, and like it, is designed for use as a supplementary reader in middle and lower primary classes. As in the preceding volumes of the series, the tales are from various sources and represent the fairy lore of various peoples and countries. The first has been derived from Mrs. Steel's "Tales of the Punjab"; the second, from "The Purple Land," by W. H. Hudson; the sixth and ninth, from "Indian Fables," by Ramaswami Raju; the tenth, from J. H. Ingram's translation of the tales of Fernan Caballero; and the rest from similar sources. All have been entirely rewritten and much modified to adapt them to the uses and purposes intended.

ANOTHER FAIRY READER

LAMBIKIN

A NURSERY STORY OF THE FAR EAST

A long time ago there was a wee, wee lamb who played in the meadow from morning till night. He was so little and jolly that everybody called him Lambikin.

One day he said to his mother, "I am getting quite large now. I should like to go and visit my dear grandmother."

So his mother gave him her blessing and showed him the shortest road.

"Beware of the wolf," she said.

"Yes, mother," he answered.

"And don't stay at your grandmother's too long."

"No, mother."

Then he kissed her good-by, and started. He went frisking along, and jumping for joy; for he was thinking of the good times he would have at his grandmother's.

All at once, as he came to a narrow place in the road, a red fox ran out from among the bushes.

"Good morning, Lambikin," said the cunning fox. "You need not go any farther; for although you are so little, I'm going to EAT YOU UP!"

But Lambikin only kicked up his little heels and said:—

" To grandmother's house I'll go,
And there I'll bigger grow;
I'll be fatter then, you know,
And you can eat me so."

The fox thought to himself, " He is, indeed, very little. He will be much better when he grows fatter."

So he let Lambikin pass.
The little fellow went frisking

along, and was very happy; for the morning was beautiful, and he was thinking of the many things his grandmother would give him.

All at once as he was passing near some tall trees, an eagle swooped down.

"Good morning, Lambikin," said the fierce big bird. "You need not go any farther; for I am going to carry you to my little eaglets, and they'll EAT YOU UP!"

But Lambikin only tossed up his head and leaped gayly into the air. Then he said, —

"To grandmother's house I'll go,
And there I'll bigger grow;
I'll be fatter then, you know,
And they can eat me so."

The eagle looked at him closely, and then said, "You are, indeed, very little and hardly a mouthful for my eaglets. You will be much better after you have grown fatter."

So he let Lambikin pass.

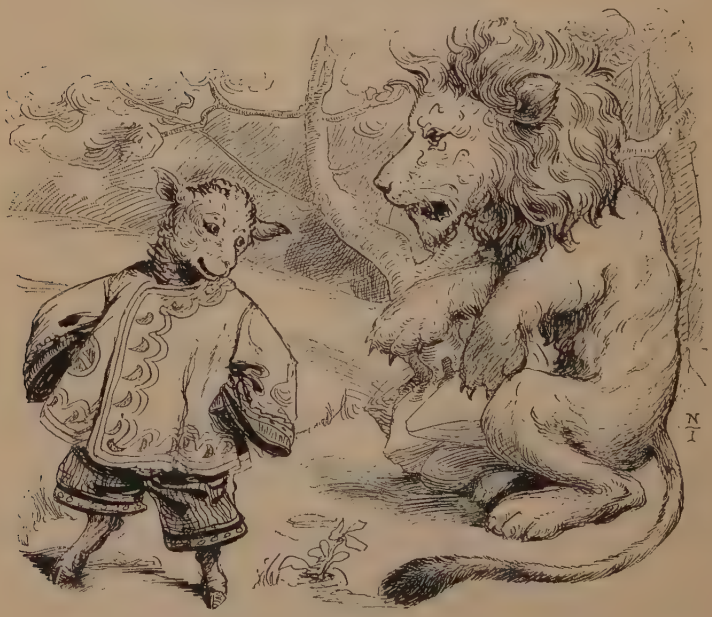
The happy creature trotted onward, stopping now and then to nibble the grass, and thinking of nothing but the good things his grandmother would give him.

All at once as he was passing through some dark woods, a lion leaped out and stood in the path before him.

"Good morning, Lambikin," said the lion. "I have been looking for you a long time, and now I am going to EAT YOU UP!"

But Lambikin was not afraid. He only frisked the more gayly, and said: —

"To grandmother's house I'll go,
And there I'll bigger grow;
I'll be fatter then, you know,
And you can eat me so."



The lion looked at him, and then said: "You are indeed a scrawny little

thing and not big enough to make half a meal for me. You will be much better after you have grown bigger and fatter."

So he let Lambikin pass.

The little fellow went on; and he was very happy, because the sun was shining and the birds were singing and the merry summer was at its best.

At last he reached his grandmother's house, and everybody was glad to see him. But now he was not so happy, for he seemed to be thinking of something.

"Grandmother," he said, "I have something to tell you."

"What is it, dear Lambikin," said his grandmother.

"Well," said he, "I have promised some folks that I will grow fat. So please put me in the corncrib and let me have plenty to eat."

"You are a good boy, and you deserve a nice cake," said his grandmother.

Then she put him in the corncrib where he had nothing to do but eat, eat, eat. At the end of seven days he was so fat that he could hardly walk.

"Now you have had a good visit with me," said his grandmother. "To-morrow you must go home and show your mother how much you have grown."

"Oh, Grandmother," said the little fellow, "I must not go home by the

road that I came, for I am so fat and sleek that every animal will want to eat me up."

"That is true," said his grand-

mother; "but I will arrange all that. Here is a nice little drum which your master made out of a big sheep's skin. It is so little and so tight that we call

it a drumikin. You must creep into it and curl yourself up nice and warm in the middle of it. Then the animals in the woods will not see you; they will not know how fat you have grown."

So Lambikin curled himself up in the drumikin; and the drumikin rolled gayly away from the grandmother's house.

Soon they met the lion walking in front of his den in the dark woods. He roared very loudly and said,—

"Drumikin! Drumikin!
Have you seen Lambikin?"

With that, Lambikin laughed softly to himself inside of the drumikin, and answered,—

"Lost in the forest, and so are you!
Drumikin! Lambikin! Tum-pa, tum-too!"

"What a pity that I didn't eat him before," said the lion; and he roared more loudly than ever.

But Lambikin, hidden in the drumikin, went gayly on. He kept laughing to himself, and singing, —

"Tum-pa, tum-too!
Tum-pa, tum-too!
What can you do?
Who's afraid of you?
Tum-pa, tum-too!"

After a while the eagle came swooping down. She looked at the drumikin, and flew this way and that as if she was hunting for something. Then she said, —

"Drumikin! Drumikin!
Have you seen Lambikin?"

And Lambikin from his safe hiding place answered as before, —

"Lost in the forest, and so are you!
On, little Drumikin! Tum-pa, tum-too;
Tum-pa, tum-too; tum-pa, tum-too."

Then the eagle sighed and flew away to her nest. "I wish I had brought him to my eaglets when he was passing by the other day," she said. "He was little, but he was better than nothing."

But the drumikin was trundling onward through the woods, and the gay little Lambikin was sitting curled up in his hiding place, and not at all afraid.

At last at a turn in the road, the red fox came out. He was limping on three legs and making believe that he was very lame. He sat down in the middle of the road, and said,—

"Drumikin! Drumikin!
Have you seen Lambikin?"

Then Lambikin laughed to himself, and began the same answer,—

"Lost in the forest, and so are you!
On, little Drumikin! Tum-pa, tum—"

But he never finished it. For the

fox knew his voice, and leaped upon

the drumikin, and drew poor Lambikin out of his snug hiding place.

"Hello, Lambikin!" he cried. "You did grow very fat and plump at your grandmother's, and I'm glad of it; for now I am going to EAT YOU UP!"

And that was the last of Lambikin.

THE CHILD OF THE MIST

A FAIRY TALE OF URUGUAY

Far, far from here, but close to the river Yi, there once lived a little girl whose name was Alma.

She lived with her grandmother and six uncles in a long, low house, far from any town.

Her grandmother was always busy, and had no time to talk.

Her uncles were big, tall men with long beards; and they talked about nothing but cattle and horses, all the day long.

There was no one for Alma to talk to, and she had never had any one to

play with; for there was not another child within miles and miles of her lonely home.

All around the house, and as far as she could see, there was nothing but tall grass and green pastures, where wild cattle and wild horses roamed as they pleased. Alma thought that all the world was covered with grass.

When she went out of doors she heard the dogs barking and the hens cackling and the birds singing and the grass rustling; but she could not understand a word that they said.

One day, as she had no one to play with, she sat down upon the ground and began to cry.

An old black woman, who was

picking up sticks, saw her. "What is the matter, Alma?" she asked.

"I am crying because I have no one to play with," said Alma.

Then the black woman took a long brass pin from her shawl and scratched Alma's tongue with it.

"Now," said the woman, "you can understand the cats and the birds and the trees. Go and play with them."

Alma was very glad. She ran into the house to talk to the cat.

"Come, puss, let us play together," she said.

"Oh, no," said the cat, "I am very busy trying to catch a mouse under the bed. You must go down to the river and play with little Nebla."

Then Alma went out to see the dogs.

"Come and play with me," she said.

"Oh, no," they answered, "we are too busy watching the house and barking at strangers. You must go down to the river and play with little Nebla."

Just then Alma saw some little yellow ducklings following their

mother about the yard. She ran and caught one, and said, "Little duckling, come and play with me."

But the duckling only tried to get away and cried, "Mamma! mamma! I am afraid of little Alma."

The old duck came up, quacking at a great rate. "Put my baby down, Alma," she said. "If you want to play, go down to the river and see little Nebla."

Alma put the little duck on the ground. "Yes, I will go and see little Nebla, down by the river," she said.

She ran all the way to the Yi; but there was a cloud of white mist resting upon the water, and at first she could not see anything else.

She stood and waited on the green bank. By and by she saw a beautiful child flying in the white mist.

The child came and stood by her.

She was very beautiful, and she wore a white dress, whiter than milk. She had white silk stockings and red shoes; and round her neck was a string of big gold beads.

Then Alma said, "What is your name, little girl?"

"I am Nebla, the child of the mist."

"Will you come and play with me?"

"Oh, no. I cannot play with little girls who are barefooted, like you, and dressed in coarse blue frocks."

For you must know that Alma wore only a short dress that came hardly to her knees; and she had neither shoes nor stockings.

Then the child of the mist rose up and floated away, away over the river; and Alma sat down on the bank and cried.

There were two big willow trees

standing quite near her, and their leaves were rustling in the wind. By and by they began talking to each other, and Alma listened.

"Have you any nests in your branches?" said one.

"Yes," said the other. "I have one nest. It was built by a little yellow bird, and there are five speckled eggs in it."

Then the first tree said, "Did you see little Alma just now? What was she crying about?"

"She was crying because she has no one to play with," answered the other. "Little Nebla will not play with her because she is so poorly dressed."

"Ah!" said the first tree, "she ought to go and see the fox. The fox always has a store of pretty things in her den."

Alma heard this. She knew that a certain old fox lived on the hill-side beyond the house. She had often seen it there, playing with some little foxes.

So she ran to the hill and cried, "Fox! Fox!"

The fox peeped out of its den. "Go away, Alma," it said. "Go and play with little Nebla."

Then Alma answered, "Dear Fox, little Nebla will not play with me, for I am so poorly dressed. Won't you give me a pretty frock and some

stockings and shoes? Then perhaps she will play with me."

The fox thought about this for a long time. Then it brought from its den a big bundle tied up in a red cotton handkerchief.

"Here are some things, Alma," it said. "I hope they will fit you, for you are good and kind to all of us animals."

"I thank you, dear Fox," said Alma; and she ran home as fast as she could.

She went to her own little corner in her grandmother's bedroom and opened the bundle. Out came a beautiful white dress, and white stockings, and red shoes, and a string of golden beads. They fitted the child well; and she was very happy.

Early the next day she dressed herself in her pretty clothes and ran down to the place where the two willows stood.

Soon the beautiful child of the mist came floating down.

"Will you play with me to-day?" said little Alma.

"Yes, for you are dressed very prettily," answered the child.

So they played together all the morning. They gathered flowers; they ran races; they talked and sang, and were very happy. At last as the sun grew warm, Nebla bade Alma good-by, and floated away in the white mist.

After that, Alma no longer cried for some one to play with. For every fair morning she found the child of the mist waiting for her by the river. She talked also to the birds and every living creature that she knew. And each of these whispered to the others, "Did you ever see so beautiful a child as our Alma?"

MR. VINEGAR AND HIS FORTUNE

A FOLK STORY OF THE WEST OF ENGLAND

I

A long time ago there lived a poor man whose real name has been forgotten. He was little and old, and his face was wrinkled; and that is why his friends called him Mr. Vinegar.

His wife was also little and old; and they lived in a little old cottage at the back of a little old field.

One day when Mrs. Vinegar was sweeping, she swept so hard that the little old door of the cottage fell down.

She was frightened. She ran out into the field and cried, "John! John!

The house is falling down. We shall have no shelter over our heads."

Mr. Vinegar came and looked at the door.

Then he said, "Don't worry about that, my dear. Put on your bonnet

and we will go out and seek our fortune."

So Mrs. Vinegar put on her hat, and Mr. Vinegar put the door on his head and they started.

They walked and walked all day. At night they came to a dark forest where there were many tall trees.

"Here is a good place to lodge," said Mr. Vinegar.

So he climbed a tree and laid the door across some branches. Then Mrs. Vinegar climbed the tree, and the two laid themselves down on the door.

"It is better to have the house under us than over us," said Mr. Vinegar. But Mrs. Vinegar was fast asleep, and did not hear him.

Soon it was pitch dark, and Mr. Vinegar also fell asleep. At midnight he was awakened by hearing a noise below him.

He started up. He listened.

"Here are ten gold pieces for you, Jack," he heard some one say; "and here are ten pieces for you, Bill. I'll keep the rest for myself."

Mr. Vinegar looked down. He saw three men sitting on the ground. A lighted lantern was near them.

"Robbers!" he cried in great fright, and sprang to a higher branch.

As he did this he kicked the door from its resting place. The door fell crashing to the ground, and Mrs. Vinegar fell with it.

The robbers were so badly scared that they took to their heels and ran helter-skelter into the dark woods.

"Are you hurt, my dear?" asked Mr. Vinegar.

"Ah, no!" said his wife. "But who would have thought that the door would tumble down in the night? And here is a beautiful lantern, all lit and burning, to show us where we are."

Mr. Vinegar scrambled to the ground. He picked up the lantern to look at it. But what were those shining things that he saw lying all around?

"Gold pieces! gold pieces!" he cried; and he picked one up and held it to the light.

"We've found our fortune! We've found our fortune!" cried Mrs. Vinegar; and she jumped up and down for joy.

They gathered up the gold pieces. There were fifty of them, all bright and yellow and round.

"How lucky we are!" said Mr. Vinegar.

"How lucky we are!" said Mrs. Vinegar.

Then they sat down and looked at the gold till morning.

"Now, John," said Mrs. Vinegar, "I'll tell you what we'll do. You must go to the town and buy a cow. I will milk her and churn butter, and we shall never want for anything."

"That is a good plan," said Mr. Vinegar.

So he started off to the town, while his wife waited by the roadside.

II

Mr. Vinegar walked up and down the street of the town, looking for a cow. After a time a farmer came that way, leading one that was very pretty and fat.

"Oh, if I only had that cow," said Mr. Vinegar, "I would be the happiest man in the world."

"She is a very good cow," said the farmer.

"Well," said Mr. Vinegar, "I will give you these fifty gold pieces for her."

The farmer smiled and held out his hand for the money. "You may have her," he said. "I always like to oblige my friends."

Mr. Vinegar took hold of the cow's halter and led her up and down the street. "I am the luckiest man in the world," he said, "for only see how all the people are looking at me and my cow."

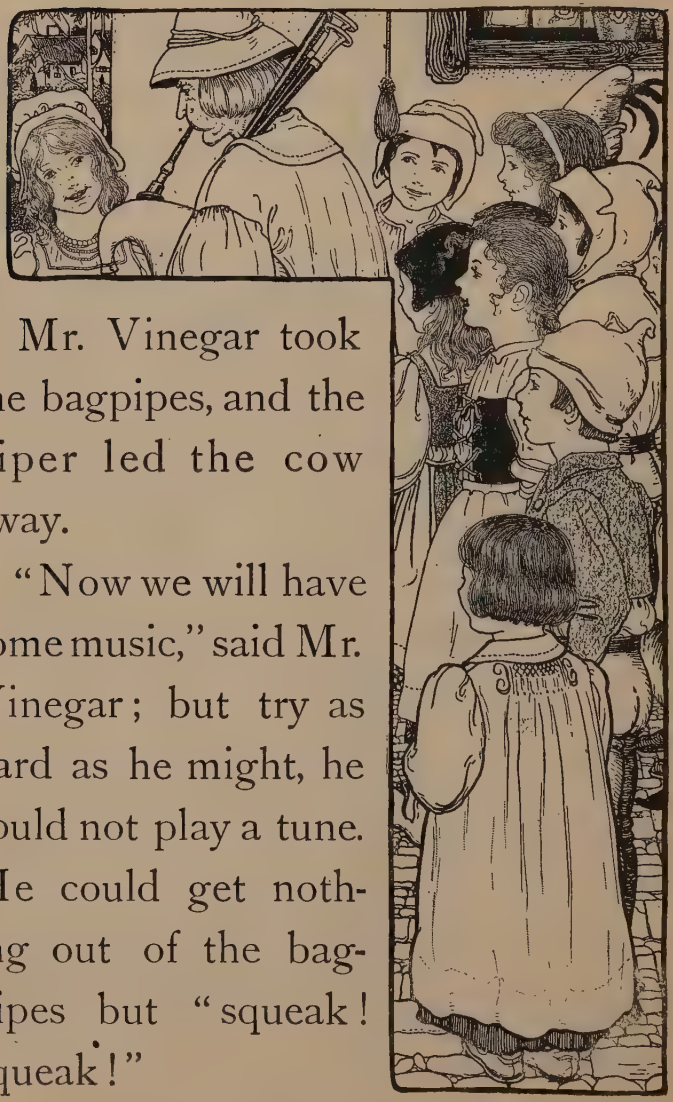
But at one end of the street he met a man playing bagpipes. He stopped and listened. Tweedle-dee, tweedle-dee!

"Oh, that is the sweetest music I ever heard," he said. "And just see how all the children crowd around the man and give him pennies! If I only had those bagpipes, I would be the happiest man in the world."

"I will sell them to you," said the piper.

"Will you? Well then, since I have no money, I will give you this cow for them."

"You may have them," answered the piper. "I always like to oblige a friend."



Mr. Vinegar took the bagpipes, and the piper led the cow away.

"Now we will have some music," said Mr. Vinegar; but try as hard as he might, he could not play a tune. He could get nothing out of the bagpipes but "squeak! squeak!"

The children, instead of giving him pennies, laughed at him. The day was chilly, and, in trying to play the pipes, his fingers grew very cold. He wished that he had kept the cow.

He had just started for home when he met a man who had warm gloves on his hands. "Oh, if I only had those pretty gloves," he said, "I would be the happiest man in the world."

"How much will you give for them?" asked the man.

"I have no money, but I will give you these bagpipes," answered Mr. Vinegar.

"Well," said the man, "you may have them; for I always like to oblige a friend."

Mr. Vinegar gave him the bagpipes and drew the gloves on over his half-frozen fingers. "How lucky I am!" he said, as he trudged homeward.

His hands were soon quite warm; but the road was rough and the walking hard. He was very tired when he came to the foot of a steep hill.

"How shall I ever get to the top?" he said.

Just then he met a man who was walking the other way. He had a stick in his hand which he used as a cane to help him along.

"My friend," said Mr. Vinegar, "if I only had that stick of yours to help me up this hill, I would be the happiest man in the world."

"How much will you give me for it?" asked the man.

"I have no money, but I will give you this pair of warm gloves," said Mr. Vinegar.

"Well," said the man, "you may have it; for I always like to oblige a friend."

Mr. Vinegar's hands were now quite warm. So he gave the gloves to the man and took the stout stick to help him along.

"How lucky I am," he said, as he toiled upward.

At the top of the hill he stopped to rest. But as he was thinking of all his good luck that day, he heard some one calling his name. He

looked up and saw only a green parrot sitting in a tree.

"Mr. Vinegar! Mr. Vinegar!" it cried.

"What now?" asked Mr. Vinegar.

"You're a dunce! You're a dunce!" answered the bird. "You went to seek your fortune, and you found it. Then you gave it for a cow, and the cow for some bagpipes, and the bagpipes for some gloves, and the gloves for a stick which you might have cut by the roadside. He! he! he! he! he! You're a dunce! You're a dunce!"

This made Mr. Vinegar very angry. He threw the stick at the bird with all his might. But the bird

only answered, "You're a dunce! You're a dunce!" and the stick lodged in the tree where he could not get it again.

Mr. Vinegar went on slowly, for he had many things to think about. His wife was standing by the roadside, and as soon as she saw him she cried out, "Where's the cow? Where's the cow?"

"Well, I don't just know where the cow is," said Mr. Vinegar; and then he told her the whole story.

I have heard said that she gave him a sound beating; but it is best not to believe such tales.

"We are no worse off than we were yesterday," said Mr. Vinegar.

"Let us go home and take care of our little old house."

Then he put the door on his head and trudged onward. And Mrs. Vinegar followed him.

THE PEARS AND THE PUDDING

A FOLK STORY OF INDIA

Once there was a very old woodman and he lived in a little cottage close by a rich man's orchard. On the other side of the fence in front of the cottage there was a fine pear tree, and some of

its branches hung right over the cottage yard.

"How nice it would be," said the woodman and his wife, "if we might have some of the pears that grow on those branches!"

The rich man overheard them. "You may have all that fall into your yard," said he.

"Oh, thank you! thank you!" said the woodman.

"You are very, very kind," said the woodman's wife.

Every day the pears became more and more tempting. They grew so large and yellow that it made one's mouth water to see them. But not one of them fell to the ground.

"I wish a great storm would come and knock them off," said the woodman.

"I wish a flock of crows would fly into the tree and peck every pear that is on it," said his wife.

"I wish it would hail this very night," said the woodman.

"I wish there would be thunder and lightning," said his wife.

But none of these things happened.

"Well, well!" said the wife at last, "we are ruined. At this rate we shall soon be beggars; for those pears will stay on the tree forever."

So she gave her husband nothing to eat but dry bread. "The pears won't fall," she said, "and so we can't afford to be extravagant."

The poor man became quite thin and weak. He looked up at the ripe, yellow pears, and wished for them every hour of the day. But he did not dare to touch them lest the owner of the tree should see him.

"I'll tell you what, wife," he said one day; "I'm hungry, and I won't do another bit of work till I have had something good to eat."

So she took some rice and some flour, and some butter and some spices, and began to cook a most delicious pudding. Ah! how good it smelled! The woodman's eyes sparkled as he sat down to the table and made ready to gobble it up.

"Not yet, not yet!" said the greedy

wife. "You shall not have a mouthful till you have brought me another load of wood. You must work for your dinner."

So the poor man took his ax and went out into the forest. There he began to hew and hack with all his might; and with every stroke of his ax he fancied that he smelled the pudding. Soon he had a large bundle of fagots on the ground before him — as big a load as he could carry.

He was hurrying to lift it upon his shoulder when a brown bear came ambling through the woods.

"Good morning to you, my friend," said the bear. "What are you going to do with that big bundle of wood?"

"I am going to carry it home," said the man. "My wife has made the most delicious pudding you ever saw; and if I carry this wood to her, she will give me as much as I can eat. Oh, my dear sir, you ought to smell that pudding. There was never anything like it."

"I wonder if your wife would give me a taste, if I brought her a load of wood," said the bear.

"She might do so," said the woodman; "but it would have to be a big load."

"How would five hundred pounds do?"

"Oh, that is no load at all. I carry more than that every day."

"Well, say eight hundred pounds. Would that please the good woman?"

"It would not please her very much. But, say you will carry ten hundred,

or half a ton. I think she will give you some pudding for a load like that. Indeed, I will promise it myself."

"Half a ton is a pretty big load," said the bear.

"But only think of the pudding!" said the man. "There are spices in it, and sugar."

The bear licked his lips, and his eyes twinkled with the thought of it.

"All right," he answered. "Go home and tell your wife to keep the pudding hot. I'll be there with the wood in a little while."

The woodman ran home, much pleased to think that he had no load to carry.

"Where is the wood?" asked his wife.

"Oh, the brown bear is bringing it. He will be here in a minute with ten

times as much as I could carry. And we must give him a small share of the pudding."

"How much did you agree to give him?"

"A small share."

"Well, I'm thinking it's a small share that you'll get for yourself. For the bear will gobble up the whole pudding at a mouthful. Mind what I say."

The woodman became very uneasy, and he was also very hungry.

"If there is any danger of that," he said, "we had best begin right now, so as to have a good start."

"I think so too," said his wife.

So they sat down on the floor with

the pot between them, and began to eat.

"We must leave some for the bear," said the woodman.

"Oh, certainly, certainly," said his wife.

Then both went on eating as though they had never tasted a pudding before.

"We must save some for the bear," said the woman, with her mouth quite full.

"Oh, certainly, certainly," said her husband, eating very fast.

It was not long until the pot was empty; there was not even a grain of rice left

"There, the pudding is all gone," said the woodman. "You have eaten your own share and also the bear's."

"You ate twice as much as I did!" said his wife.

"Nonsense! a woman always eats faster than a man. I only ate my own share."

"You ate the bear's share too."

"No, I didn't."

"Yes, you did."

"Well, there's no use quarreling about it. The question is, what shall we do when the bear comes and finds the pudding all gone?"

"He will be very angry," said the woman.

"He will be very troublesome," said the man.

"I'll tell you what," said the woman. "We will lock up all the food there is in the house, then we will hide ourselves in the attic. He will think that we have gone out and have left the pudding for him. He will throw down his load of wood and look in the pot."

"And he will find it empty!"

"Yes, he will find it empty, and

will make a great fuss about it. But how can he help himself?"

So they made haste to lock up all the food in the house. Then they left the pot in the middle of the floor, and ran to hide themselves in the attic.

Soon the bear came, puffing and panting, with his great load of wood. He saw the pot sitting in the middle of the floor. He threw down his load by the door, and ran in.

Oh, how angry he was when he found that the pudding had been eaten up! Not a grain of rice could he find. There was nothing left but the delicious smell.

All this put him into a dreadful

temper. He turned everything in the house topsy-turvy, but he could not find a mouthful of food. He would have carried the wood away, but it was very heavy and he was tired.

"I'll take the pot with me," he said. "If I can't get a taste of the pudding, I'll at least have the smell."

So he picked up the pot and started. But as he crossed the yard he saw the golden pears hanging upon the branches of the great pear tree.

"Ha!" he cried. "Here is a treat. This is better than all your puddings."

The next minute he was on the wall; he was up the tree; he was gathering the fruit; he was eating, and enjoying himself.

"This is what I call good fortune," he said. "I will take the rest of the pears home with me and sell them. Ha! Ha! Who is so lucky as I?"

So he gathered all the ripe pears and put them in the pudding pot. When he found a green one he would shake his head and say, "No-

body will buy that, and yet it would be a pity to waste it." Then he would cram it into his mouth and eat it, making wry faces and grumbling because it was sour.

Now, all this time, the woodman and his wife were watching the bear from the attic window. Suddenly, as the last pear was dropped into the pudding pot, the woman sneezed very loudly, "*Ah-che-u!*"

This startled the bear. He thought that some one was firing a gun at him. He scrambled from the tree to the wall. He dropped the pudding pot into the cottage yard, and leaped to the ground. He fled into the forest and was never seen again.

The woodman and his wife came down and found the pot full of ripe fruit lying upon the ground. "Oh, here are our pears at last!" cried the man.

"Yes, here are our pears," said the woman. "But we should never have had them had I not baked that pudding."

A QUEER PARTNERSHIP

A NURSERY STORY OF DENMARK

I

A cat and a mouse once lived in the same house. The house had been empty a long time.

At first the mouse was very much afraid of the cat and would scamper away whenever he saw her.

"Oh, my dear little fellow," said Puss, "do not run. I will not harm

you. Stay and talk with me a little while."

By and by the mouse grew braver. He would come out and talk to the cat about the weather and the latest news of the town.

The cat was very kind and gentle, and it was not long till she and the mouse were very good friends.

"Don't you find it very lonely, living all by yourself in the big, empty pantry?" asked the cat.

"Yes, indeed I do," answered the mouse; "and it is also very hard to make a living in such a pantry."

"Suppose we go into partnership and keep house together," said the cat. "Then we can have each other's

company on these long, cold winter evenings."

The mouse agreed to this, and the two friends shook hands and agreed to stand by each other, no matter what might happen.

II

"Now, Mr. Mouse, you must stay at home and keep the room neat and clean," said the cat; "for if you should go out, you might fall into a trap."

"And you, my friend Cat, must do the marketing," said the mouse. "You are good at making bargains, and your arms are strong for carrying things home."

"That is right," answered the cat. "Give me your purse and I will go out at once. Winter is coming and if we do not lay up a good store of food, we shall go hungry."

In a little while she came back with a pot of fat she had bought.

"Where shall we put it?"

"I don't know," said the mouse.

They looked in this corner and that, but they could find no good place for the pot.

"I'll tell you," at last said the cat. "Let us put it in a corner of the church. Nobody will think of looking there for it, and it will be quite safe till we want it."

So they carried the pot of fat to the church and hid it in a dark corner.

Hardly had winter set in before the cat began to long for a taste of the fat. But the mouse said, "Wait till food is hard to get and we are really hungry."

III

One day the cat said, "I am invited out to-day, little mousie. My cousin has a little son, white with brown stripes, and she wants me to be

his godmother. So, take good care of the house while I am gone."

"Oh, surely," said the mouse, "and when you have anything good to eat, remember me."

But the cat's story was all made up. She had no cousin, and of course there was no little son with white and brown stripes. She went to the church. She crept slyly in. She went straight to the little pot and lifted the lid. She licked off the top of the fat.

"Ah, how good!"

In the evening she went home.

"Welcome!" said the mouse. "Did you have a pleasant visit at your cousin's?"

"Very pleasant, indeed."

"What is the baby's name?"

"Top Off," said the cat, very soberly.

"What a funny name!" said the mouse. "Is it a common name in your family?"

"Common or not common," answered the cat, "it is not a bad name. It is better than Breadthief, as your sister's child is called."

IV

Before a week had gone by, the cat wanted to have another taste of the fat. So she said, "I am invited out again to-day, little mouse."

"How very lucky you are!" said the mouse.

"Yes," answered the cat. "My second cousin has a son with a white ring round its neck, and I am to be its godmother."

"Then go," said the kind mouse, "and remember me while you are feasting."

The cat went to the church. She crept slyly in. She went straight to the little pot and lifted the lid. Then she ate half of the fat that was left in it.

"How good it is to eat by one-self!" she said.

When she went home, the mouse asked, "Did you have a pleasant visit at your cousin's?"

"Oh, yes," was the answer. "Very pleasant, indeed!"

"What is the name of this baby with the white ring around its neck?" asked the mouse.

"Half Gone," answered the cat, very soberly.

"What a funny name!" cried the mouse. "I never heard of such names. Top Off and Half Gone! They almost make me laugh."

"Oh, you sit at home in your gray coat and long tail, and think everything is funny," said the cat.

The next day she longed for another taste of the fat.

"Good mousie," she said, "you surely will excuse me. I am

invited out again. This time my third cousin has a son who is quite black with very white paws, and I am to be its godmother."

"How lucky you are," said the mouse, "and how many cousins you must have! But go, and think of me while you are at dinner."

The cat went to the church as before. She crept slyly in, and ate up every bit of the fat.

The mouse worked hard all day. He made the house neat and tidy. Then he sat down and waited.

At last there was a knock at the door, and the cat came in.

"Well, did you have a good time to-day?" asked the mouse.

"Very good, indeed," said the cat. "I could not have had better."

"And what is the name of the little black fellow with white paws?"

"Oh, it won't please you any better than the others. He is called Clean Gone."

The mouse laughed. "Top Off, Half Gone, Clean Gone! Who ever heard of such funny names!" he said. Then he curled himself up and went to sleep.

V

The days grew colder and colder, and it was now very hard to get food. But the cat stayed at home and was not invited out again.

Midwinter came, and the mouse said, "Come, friend Cat, we are both very hungry. Let us go over to the church and have a mouthful of

our pot of fat. It will taste good."

"Yes," answered the cat, "it will taste as good as a lap of air."

They went straight to the church and found the little pot where they had put it. But it was empty.

"Ah, now I know what has happened," said the mouse. "I see through the whole story. When you were godmother you ate it all, — first the top off, second half gone, and then — "

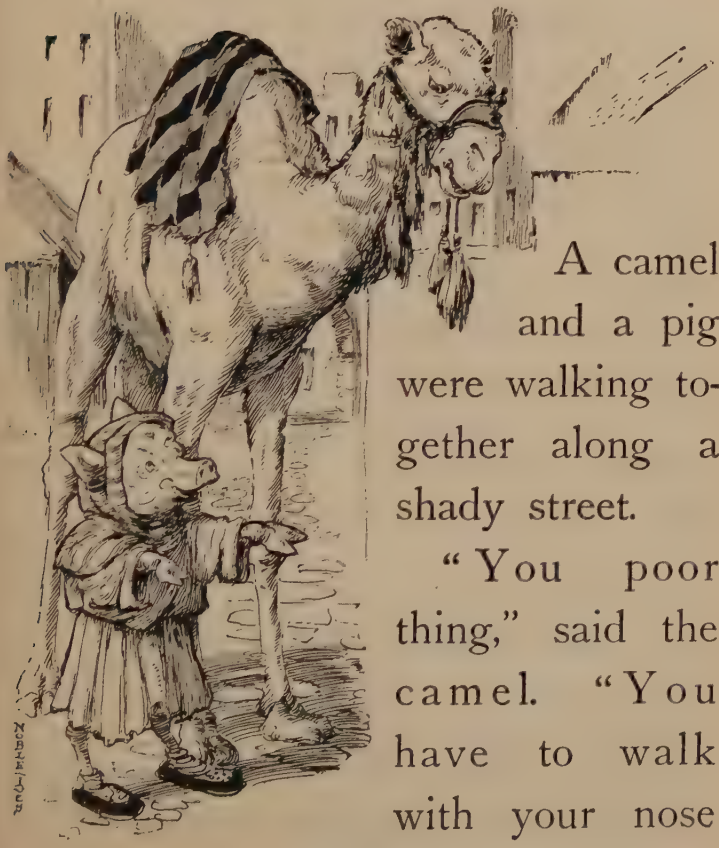
"Say another word," said the cat, "and I'll eat you up!"

"Clean gone" was already on the poor mouse's tongue. The cat sprang upon him, and soon made an end of the poor creature.

It is thus that the weak are at the mercy of the strong.

THE CAMEL AND THE PIG

AN EASTERN FABLE



A camel and a pig were walking together along a shady street.

"You poor thing," said the camel. "You have to walk with your nose

always on the ground. Don't you wish you were tall like me?"

"Ah, no!" answered the pig. "There's nothing like being short."

"There's nothing like being tall, I say," said the camel. "You are not only short, but you are foolish."

"It is best to be short," said the pig, "and I will prove it. If I fail to do so, I'll give you my snout."

"It is best to be tall," said the camel, "and I will prove it. If I fail to do so, I'll give you my hump."

"Agreed!" said the pig.

"Agreed!" said the camel.

They walked on together till they came to a garden. All around the

garden there was a low stone wall without any gate or other opening.

"Now see what the tall one can do," said the camel.

He stood by the side of the wall, and with his long neck reached over to the plants that were growing within. He picked up and ate, first one thing and then another, until he had made a hearty breakfast.

Then he turned to the pig and laughed. "Now which would you rather be, tall or short?" he said.

The pig had not even had a glimpse of the good things that were inside. But he answered: "Wait awhile. Perhaps you will wish to be short before the day is gone."

They went on, along a dusty road which led them far out of the town. The sun was hot. There was not even a tree by the roadside to make a cool shade for them.

Towards noon they came to a high fence around a field. They looked through and could see green trees within, and plenty of ripe fruit lying on the ground. There was a pleasant brook flowing through shady places, and its banks were green with grass.

"Now see what the short one can do," said the pig.

He slipped under the fence with ease. He ate his fill of the fallen fruit, he cooled himself in the pleasant brook, he tasted of the sweet grass.

Then feeling much refreshed, he came out, laughing.

"Which would you rather be—short or tall?" he said to the camel,

who was standing in the broiling sun and had not had a taste of the good things inside of the field.

"Let us go home," answered the camel, "and we will talk about it on the way."

So they strolled slowly back to town, and as they walked, they talked the matter over. At last they agreed that the camel should keep his hump and the pig his snout.

"Tall is good where tall will do," said the pig.

"The same of short is also true," said the camel.

FARMER WEATHERBEARD

A FAIRY TALE OF THE FAR NORTH

I

In a rough and cold country far across the sea there lived a poor man and his wife, who had but one son.

The name of this son was Fritz, and he was a very likely lad; for he was tall and strong and had a fair, good face.

"It is time that our Fritz was learning a trade," said his mother. "You must go to town with him and find him a place."

"What kind of trade ought he to learn?" asked his father.

"Oh, that does not matter," answered the mother. "But wherever he goes and whatever he learns, he must be taught to be the master of all masters."

The next morning she put some food in a bag and gave it to Fritz to carry. Then his father took him by the hand and said, "Come, my son; we will find you a place to learn a trade."

It was a cold day, and the town was many miles away.

When Fritz and his father had walked for a long time they came to a river that was all frozen across; and on the ice they saw a man with a long gray beard.

The man was in a wagon and he was driving a fine black horse. He spoke to Fritz and his father and said, "Where are you going this frosty winter morning?"

"Oh," answered the father, "I am going to find a place for my son where he can learn a trade. And that will be no easy matter, for his mother says that he must learn to be the master of all masters."

"It will be easier than you think," said the stranger. "I am the man who can teach him to be the master of all masters."

"We are indeed lucky," said the father, "and if we can agree, I shall be glad to let my son go with you."

"Agree?" said the stranger. "Of course we can agree. And while we

are talking, let the boy sit by me here in the wagon."

Fritz climbed up into the wagon; but no sooner was he seated than the

horse leaped up into the air with them and went sailing away toward the clouds.

"Stop! stop! stop!" cried the father. "Wait a minute. We have not agreed yet. Who are you?"

The stranger looked back and said: "I am called Farmer Weatherbeard. My home is in the north, the south, the east, and the west. Come here again next year and I will tell you how your son gets along with me."

In another minute the horse and wagon, the stranger and Fritz, were out of sight.

II

The man ran home as fast as he could. He met his wife at the

door and told her all that had happened.

"How long is he going to keep our Fritz?" asked the woman.

"He did not say," was the answer; "for we had no agreement."

"Well, then, you must go to-morrow and find out. And be sure you don't come home till you have learned all about this Farmer Weatherbeard and what he is going to do for our son."

So the next morning early, the farmer took a bag of food on his arm and started out.

He walked and walked all day long, and when night came he found himself in a thick wood.

He was about to give himself up

for lost when he saw a bright light far away among the trees.

He went toward it. Through bushes and briers and over fallen trees he made his way until he came to a little hut with a bright fire burning inside.

By the door there was a well, and by the well there stood an old woman who was drawing up water in a pail.

"Good evening, mother," said the man.

"Good evening to you, sir," was the answer. "It has been many and many a day since any one called me mother."

"I have lost my way," said the man. "May I rest in your house to-night?"

The old woman at first said "No"; but when she saw how very tired he was, she bade him come in and sit by her fire.

In the morning he asked her about Farmer Weatherbeard.

"I don't know him," said the woman. "I never heard of him. But I rule over all the beasts in the forest. I will ask them, for perhaps they know."

Then she called together all the animals both small and great. The squirrels, the field mice, the foxes, the wolves, the bears — all came at her bidding. But not one had ever heard of Father Weatherbeard.

"I am sorry," she said. "But I have two sisters who live far from here, and perhaps they know him."

"How shall I go to them?" asked the man.

"I will lend you my horse whose

name is Flash and my wagon which I call Lightning," was the answer.

III

The man started out. It was three hundred miles to the nearest sister's house; but the swift horse and swift wagon carried him there before the day was ended.

He found the sister at her well, drawing water. She kindly invited him to sit by her bright fire and rest himself.

He sat there all night, and in the morning he asked her about Farmer Weatherbeard.

"I don't know him," she said. "I never heard of him. But I rule over

all the fishes in the sea, and perhaps they know. I will ask them."

Then she called together all the fishes of the sea. But not one of them had ever heard of Farmer Weatherbeard.

"I am sorry," she said. "But I have another sister who lives a long way off. Perhaps she knows him."

"How shall I go to her?" asked the man.

"I will lend you my horse whose name is Sunbeam and my wagon which I call Swift," was the answer

IV

The man started out. It was six hundred miles to the sister's house;

but the horse and wagon carried him there before nightfall.

He found the third woman at her well drawing water.

"Good evening, mother," he said.

"Good evening to you, sir," was the answer. "It has been many and many a year since anybody called me mother."

Then she invited him to go in and rest himself by her blazing fire.

He sat there all night, and in the morning he asked her about Farmer Weatherbeard.

"I don't know him," she said. "I never heard of him. But I rule over all the birds, and perhaps they know. I will ask them."

So she called together all the birds, both great and small. "Do you know any one who calls himself Farmer Weatherbeard?" she asked.

Not one of them knew till she came to the eagle. "Yes, I know him," said the eagle. "His home is among the clouds, and he is the terror of the world."

"Will you carry me to him?" asked the man.

"I will carry you to him," answered the eagle, "but I shall not promise to bring you back alive."

Then the eagle told the man to pluck a feather out of its back and seat himself where the feather had been. The man did so, and the

eagle flew away with him through the clouds to Farmer Weatherbeard's house.

V

It was night, and all in the house were fast asleep. They went in, and the eagle said, "If you hear any one snoring you must pluck three feathers from my head."

Soon the sound of heavy breathing was heard under the table. The man plucked out the first feather.

"Oof!" cried the voice of Farmer Weatherbeard.

The man plucked out the second feather.

"*Oof!*" screamed Farmer Weatherbeard, much louder than before.

The man was afraid, but he plucked out the third feather.

"*Oof!*" shrieked Farmer Weatherbeard, so loudly that it seemed as though the roof would be lifted off the house. But he did not wake up.

The eagle then told the man what to do next, and he did it.

He went to the stable and picked up a square stone that was by the door. Three splinters of wood were under the stone, and these also he picked up.

He threw some crumbs of bread down by the door. A rabbit came out to eat them, and he caught it.

Then the eagle said, "Pluck three feathers from the tip of my tail."

"It is done," said the man.

"Put the stone, the splinters, the rabbit, and yourself on my back, and

hold on with all your might," said the eagle.

The man did so.

"Now we are off for home," said the eagle. He spread his wings and soared away through the clouds.

VI

After a long time the eagle alighted on a mountain peak.

"Look back and tell me if you see anything," he said.

The man answered, "I see a big flock of crows coming after us."

"Then we must be going," said the eagle.

He had flown only a little way when he asked the man, "Do you see anything now?"

"Yes," was the answer, "the crows are almost upon us."

"Then throw down the three feathers you plucked out of my tail."

The man did so, and the feathers became a great flock of ravens which chased the crows back to their own place among the clouds.

The eagle flew on and on till they came to another high mountain peak. There he alighted for a short rest.

"Do you see anything?" he asked.

"There is something far, far behind us," said the man, "but I can not tell what it is."

"Then we must be going," said the eagle.

He flew on a little farther. "Do you see anything now?" he asked.

"Yes," said the man; "I think it is

Farmer Weatherbeard, and he is close behind us."

"Then throw down the three splinters."

The man did so, and the splinters became a great forest of tall trees. Farmer Weatherbeard could not fly among the branches, they grew so close together.

So he had to go home for an ax to cut a road through the forest.

The eagle flew on and on till they came to a tall pine tree. He was so tired that he alighted on one of the topmost branches.

"Do you see anything?" he asked.

"Yes, something that looks like a little cloud is far behind us."

"Then we must be going," said the eagle.

After he had flown a little way, he asked, "Do you see anything now?"

"Yes; it is Farmer Weatherbeard, and he is close upon us."

"Then throw down the square stone that you took from before the stable door."

The man did so, and the stone became a great, high mountain. It made so strong a wall that Farmer Weatherbeard could neither go over it nor through it.

So he had to give up the chase and fly back home.

The eagle went on to the man's

house. The man's wife was watching for him at the door.

"Where is our Fritz, and what is he doing?" she asked.

The man did not answer. He alighted from the eagle's back, with the rabbit in his arms. The eagle spread its wings and flew away.

The rabbit was stiff and cold; its large eyes were closed.

"My poor pet," said the man, "your life was indeed a hard one up there."

He laid the rabbit upon the ground by the side of the door. Then, oh wonders! what do you think happened?

Instead of the little animal, there was the boy Fritz, as handsome and strong as ever.

"Oh, my dear, dear child!" cried the woman. "Welcome home, welcome home!"

The lad arose, and his mother led him into the house.

"How glad I am!" she said.

"And how glad I am!" he said.

"Now," said the mother, "you shall not learn a trade. I do not want you to be a master of masters. I want you to stay always at home, for home is the safest place."

RUSHY-COAT

A FAIRY TALE OF NORTH BRITAIN

I

Two little lassies once lived in the same house with their father and mother.

The elder one was ill-natured and lazy, but very fond of fine clothes.

The younger was as bonnie a las-

sie as you ever have seen, and she was as good as the day is long.

But, strange to say, the father and mother loved only the elder of the two children. They gave her everything that she wished; and she sat by the fire at home and did no work at all.

When the younger lassie grew up, she was sent to the fields to watch the cattle. There she stayed all day long with nothing to eat but a little oatmeal porridge.

Among the cattle there was a beautiful red calf that was very bright and quick. The child took good care of this calf, and always found the sweetest grass for him to

eat and the cleanest water for him to drink.

One day when she was eating her porridge the calf said, "Give that stuff to the dog, and come with me."

The lassie knew that the calf was her best friend, and so she did as he bade her. Away through the woods he led her till they came to a pretty house with vines running all over its roof.

There was nobody in the house; but the calf said, "Go inside, and help yourself to whatever you find."

So the lassie went in, and there she saw a table with a white cloth and many pretty dishes on it. She sat down, and right before her was

the finest dinner she had ever seen, and it was smoking hot.

"It is all for you," said the calf, who was standing at the window. "Help yourself."

So the lassie ate all that she wished, and then the calf led her back to the herd.

II

Every day after that the same thing happened. The calf took the lassie to the pretty house far, far in the woods; and the lassie feasted on good things, for the dinner was always ready for her.

And every day the lassie grew bonnier and bonnier till all the

country people were talking of her beauty.

This did not please the lazy sister. It did not please the father and mother, for they hoped that the poor food which they gave her would make her thin and ill-favored.

"Somebody must be feeding her," said the father. "We must find out who it is."

So they hid themselves among the bushes and watched. At noon they saw the red calf lead the lassie away into the thick woods.

They followed. They saw the little house, and the table set within, and the rich food that was placed before the lassie.

"This will never do," said the father. "That calf is a witch, and it must be killed."

So that very evening the calf was led out to be killed. But this was not all. An ax was given to the lassie, and she was told that she must kill him herself.

Oh, what a sad time it was!

The ugly sister held the calf by its head, and the lassie was to strike him with the cruel ax.

But the lassie could do nothing but weep.

Then the calf whispered to her to drop the ax and jump upon his back

She did as she was told. With a leap and a bound, the calf broke

away. The ugly sister was overturned in the dust and trampled upon.

There was a great ado among those who had come to look on. There was much running and a great deal of shouting and screaming.

But the lassie held fast to the red calf's neck; and the red calf ran and ran till he was quite safe, far away in the green wood.

"Do not be afraid," he said to the lassie. "I will take care of you."

III

After a long while the calf and the lassie came to a green meadow with a purling brook running through the middle of it.

Along the banks of the brook there were a great many rushes, all green and slender, and some of them as tall as your head.

The day was cold, the wind was raw, and the lassie's clothes were thin and worn. "Oh, my friend and helper," said she, "I am so chilled and cold that I cannot go any farther."

Then the calf stopped right by the brook. He gathered the finest and tallest rushes, and the lassie made

herself a warm coat of them. And when she put it on, she did not feel the cold any more.

The next morning they set off again. They left the woods, and traveled along strange roads till they came to the house of a king.

The lassie still wore the coat of rushes, and she stopped at the door and knocked.

The queen herself opened the door, and when she saw the lassie's bonnie face, she was pleased.

"What is your name, my child?" asked the queen; "and what do you wish to-day?"

"You may call me Rushy-coat," answered the lassie; "and I came to

ask if you need some more help in your kitchen."

"Indeed I do, Rushy-coat," said the queen, "and I shall be pleased to take you."

Then Rushy-coat said that if they would keep the calf, she would stay with them.

"Of course we will do that," said the queen.

So Rushy-coat and the calf lived a long time at the king's house, and everybody was well pleased.

IV

At last Christmas came.

The bells rang merrily, and all the people put on their best clothes to go

to church. But the lassie had nothing to wear save the coat of rushes she had made for herself.

"You must stay at home and get the dinner ready," said the mistress of the kitchen.

So Rushy-coat busied herself with the cooking, and every one else in the house went to church. But while she was at work the red calf came to the door.

"Why have you not gone to church?" he asked.

"Oh, there's reason enough," said the lassie. "In the first place, I have no clothes to wear; and in the second place, there's the dinner to be cooked."

Then the calf told her that if she would go to church he would give her the clothes and would also get the dinner ready.

He ran round the house and came back with a beautiful dress all silk and satin, and a pretty bonnet, and the finest pair of shoes that ever was seen.

The lassie made haste and dressed herself; and the calf took her place in the kitchen. Then she raised her pretty hand above the cooking things, and said: —

"Fire, blaze bright till I return,
Meat, roast well but do not burn,
Soups, boil slow and season right,
Cakes, rise soft and crisp and light,
And all obey the words I say —
For I'm going to church this Christmas day."

When she went walking into the church, everybody wondered who the bonnie lady could be. No one thought of its being Rushy-coat, the kitchen maid.

The prince, who had just come home from a long journey, was there. "Who is she?" he asked. But nobody could tell him.

"Very well," he said, "I will find out as soon as the people start home from church. I will see which way she goes."

But before the singing was quite done, Rushy-coat slipped quietly out. She wanted to get home in time to take off her dress and get dinner ready.

As she passed the door, the prince saw her and rushed out. He was too late, however. She was already out of sight; but in her haste she had lost one of her shoes.

The prince picked up the shoe and put it in his pocket. He looked this way and that, but no sign of its owner could he see.

Rushy-coat hurried back to the kitchen and took off her fine clothes. The calf had done the cooking, and everything was as it should be.

The dinner was very fine. The king and the queen were delighted. They said they had never had so pleasant a Christmas.

And all the talk at the table was about the good food that was served, and about the bonnie lady whom nobody knew.

V

Now the prince made up his mind that he would find out who the bonnie lady was. So he sent word through all the land that every young woman must come and try the shoe on her foot.

The shoe was very small, and he said that he would marry the lady whose foot it would fit.

The finest young ladies in the land hastened to try the shoe. But it was so small that none could put it on.

At last the hen woman who kept the king's chickens brought her daughter. This daughter was not pretty, but she had little feet.

The woman, to make more sure of it, had trimmed the girl's toes and clipped her feet as much as she could bear. And so, by hard work, the shoe was pushed on.

The prince felt sure that this was not the lady he had seen at church. He did not like her at all. But he had promised to marry the woman who could wear the shoe; and he would not break his promise.

VI

The day came for the wedding.

The prince and the hen woman's daughter, the king and the queen, brave knights and fair ladies, and many other people were riding to the church.

The bells were ringing merrily. The music was playing.

All at once a little bird flew past the prince, and as it flew it sang:—

"With clippèd feet and trimmèd toes,
The homely cheat to the wedding goes;

But at home, alone in the kitchen nook,
Are the wee, wee feet of the bonnie cook
For whom the prince should surely look."

The prince stopped and listened. "What was that little bird saying?" he asked.

"Oh, never mind what a bird says," answered the hen woman's daughter.

But the prince called to the bird and said, "Sing it again, little bird. I did not understand you."

So the bird alighted on his horse's neck, and sang again: —

"With clippèd feet and trimmèd toes,
The homely cheat to the wedding goes;
But at home, alone in the kitchen nook,
Are the wee, wee feet of the bonnie cook
For whom you now should surely look."

"That, indeed, I will do," said the

prince; and he turned his horse around and rode straight back to his father's house.

He went through the hall and into the kitchen, and there he saw Rushy-coat. He knew her at once, for she was so beautiful.

He handed her the shoe and said, "Try that on."

She did so, and it fitted her nicely and did not squeeze her toes at all.

"You are the bonnie lady I have been seeking so long," said the prince.

And so the hen wife's daughter had no wedding that day.

But in due time the prince and Rushy-coat were married. And I

have heard that they lived happy, and that they built a warm house for the red calf that had been so kind to the lassie when she was in trouble.

THE STORY-TELLER

A PERSIAN FABLE

In a forest there once lived a lion who was king of all the beasts. This lion was a great tyrant, and his word was the law of the forest.

"I want somebody to amuse me," he said. "I want somebody to tell me stories. He must tell me one story after another without ceasing, and each story must be better than the one before it."

The animals were all much alarmed.

"Where is the story-teller that can amuse the king?" they asked.

"Make haste," said King Lion. "If you fail to find him, I will devour you, every one. But I give you my solemn word that if you do find such

a story-teller, no harm shall come to him or to any of you."

"We are lost," said the bears and the hares. "There is no one who

can tell stories without stopping, or who can make each story better than all that were told before it."

But the fox said, "Have courage. I think I can please the king. Tell him that the story-teller is already at his court."

The animals made haste to inform the king; and the fox put on his best coat and waited at the door.

"So the story-teller has arrived?" said King Lion. "Bring him into my presence."

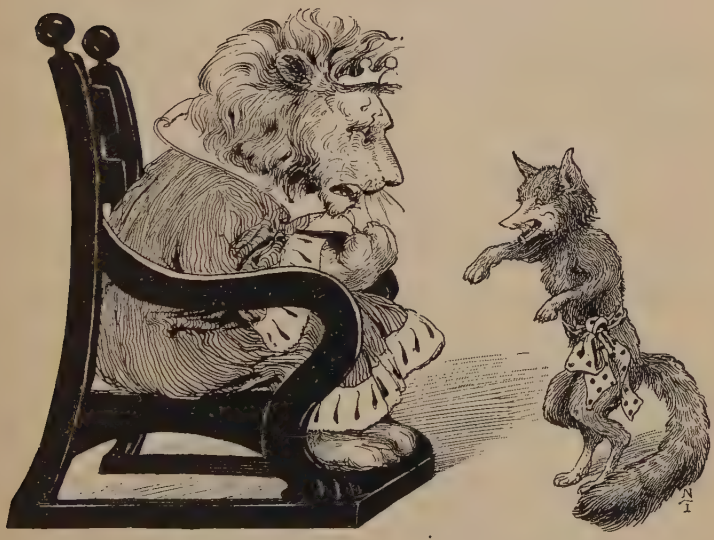
They did so, and Mr. Fox bowed very low before the king. But all the other beasts stood trembling with fear.

"Are you the story-teller who can

tell stories without ceasing?" asked King Lion.

"Yes, your majesty," said Mr. Fox.

"Then begin," said the king.



"But first," said the fox, "I should like to know what your majesty means by a story."

"A story is a story," said King

Lion. "A story is a narrative. It may be long or short; but it must relate some distinct event or fact."

"Very well," said Mr. Fox. "And do you agree that every story that relates some new fact or event is a new story?"

"Certainly," said King Lion.

"Then I will begin," said Mr. Fox. "Once upon a time there was a fisherman who went to sea. This fisherman had a huge net, and he spread it far and wide. A great many fish got into the net. Just as the fisherman was about to draw it in, the ropes broke. An opening was made in the net. One fish escaped."

Here the story-teller stopped.

"What then?" said King Lion.

"Then two fishes escaped," said Mr. Fox.

"What then?" said the impatient lion.

"Then three escaped," said Mr. Fox.

"What then?"

"Then four escaped."

And so the story-teller went on. As often as the lion repeated his inquiry, the fox increased the number by one.

At last the lion sprang up in a rage. "You are not telling me anything new," he cried. "Go on with your story."

"I have already told you a dozen stories," answered the fox, "and each

story was better than the one that came before it."

"How is that?" asked the lion.

"Did you not say that a new story is one which relates a new fact or event?"

"Yes."

"And did you not say that it might be long or short?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, I have related a dozen new facts or events; for is not the escape of each fish an event? Each event occurred by itself, and it is therefore a distinct story."

"Well! But how do you explain that each is better than the one that came before it?"

"Are not two fishes better than one? And are not twelve fishes better than eleven?"

"I suppose you are right," said the lion. "But I feel like devouring you."

"Remember your solemn word," said Mr. Fox.

"Even a king must not break his solemn word," said the lion. And he dismissed the story-teller with a handsome present.

THE BIRD OF TRUTH

A FAIRY TALE OF OLD SPAIN

I

Far away, on the other side of the sea, there once lived a poor fisherman with his wife and eight little children. The hut which he called his home was on the bank of a river in the midst of a forest. It was so small that when all the children were in it there seemed no room for more.

One day when the fisherman was casting his net into the river, he saw a cradle of glass floating upon the water. He threw his net quickly under it and drew it to the shore.

"How fine this will be to rock our baby in!" he said.

There was a coverlet of silk upon it, and when he had lifted this, what do you think he saw? Two tiny babies, a boy and girl, were lying there on a soft little bed. They looked up at him and smiled.

"Oh, here is good luck!" cried the fisherman.

He picked up the

cradle with the babies in it, and ran home as fast as he could go.

"Here are two more babies, wife!" he cried.

But his wife looked at them with dismay. "You foolish fellow," she said, "are not eight children enough for one small house? How do you think we can feed any more?"

"What would you have me do?" asked the fisherman. "Would you have me leave these pretty children to be drowned in the river, or eaten by wild beasts?"

The woman said no more; for, indeed, the babes were so beautiful that her heart yearned for them.

So there were now ten children in

the little hut instead of eight. But somehow there was always plenty to eat, and none of them ever went hungry.

The two strange babies grew very fast, and their foster parents named them Doris and Dora. They were always gentle and well-behaved, while the fisherman's own children were often quarrelsome and unkind.

II

Ten years passed by. The fisherman's children became more and more rude to little Doris and Dora.

"You have no right to stay here and eat our bread," they said. "We have a father and mother; but you

have only the river. You are nothing but beggars."

Doris and Dora made no answer to these cruel words. But every day they went out and strolled for hours along the banks of the river.

They took with them the crumbs which they had saved from their breakfast, and these they scattered under the trees for the birds.

The birds soon came to know them and love them; and in return for their kindness they taught the children many things. And Doris and Dora learned from them how to get up early in the morning, how to sing, and how to talk the language of birds.

One day the fisherman's children were more cross to them than ever before.

"You need not be so proud," said they to Doris. "You need not pretend that you are so much better than we. For even the clothes on your back belong by rights to us."

Doris, as usual, said nothing. But he went out with Dora into the woods; and all day long they walked up and down the river bank and wept.

"We must not stay here where we are so unwelcome," said Dora.

"We must go out into the world and seek our fortunes," said Doris.

"We will go to-morrow," said both.

III

Very early the next morning, the two children arose. They stole quietly out of the house while all the rest were asleep. The birds were just beginning to sing in the trees.

They ran down to the river side. "This is our friend," they said; and they walked along its bank, hoping that it would lead them to some place of safety.

They walked all day, and saw no living creature. Evening came, and they were very tired and hungry.

Suddenly they saw a small hut before them. It looked like the fisherman's hut, but was stronger and much taller.

"We will ask the good people if we may stay with them all night," said Doris.

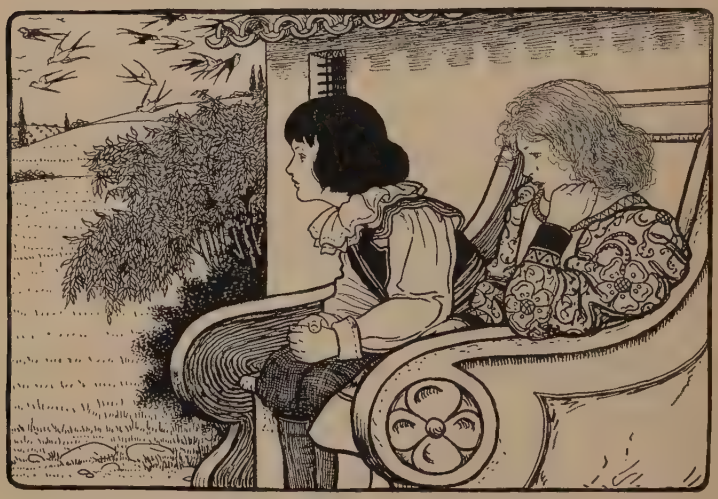
But when they came to the hut, the door was shut and locked. Nobody was at home.

Little Dora began to cry; but her brother bade her cheer up.

"Here is a bench," he said; "we will sit on it till we are rested."

So they sat down, and they were so tired that for some time they did not notice anything around them. By and by, they saw that a number of swallows were flying in and out under the eaves of the hut; and as they flew back and forth, they kept up a wonderful chattering.

"Listen, Dora," said the boy. "Let us hear what those birds are saying."



They kept very quiet and listened.

"Good evening, my dear cousin," said one swallow to another. "Have you heard the news?"

"Oh, no. What is it?"

"The little prince and princess who have been living with the fisher-

man's family, have started out to seek their fortune."

"Indeed! I hope they will find it; for they have been very kind and good to all the birds in the forest. But tell me, how did they happen to be brought up in the fisherman's hut?"

"It was this way," answered the first swallow: "The king of this land married a beautiful young lady against the advice of his nobles. They had hoped that he would marry one of their own fair daughters, and so when he chose another, they were very angry."

"I see, I see," said the second swallow.

"Well, a war soon broke out, and the king rode away at the head of his army. While he was gone, these twin children were born in his palace. They were taken by one of the nobles and put in a cradle of glass which he sent floating down the river."

"I see, I see," said the second swallow. "But what became of the king's wife, the beautiful queen?"

"Another one of the nobles carried her away to the other side of the smoky mountains, and shut her up in a gloomy castle. Then when the king came back from the war, they told him that the queen and her babes were dead."

"I see, I see," said the second

swallow. "But they were not dead. The little ones were picked up by the fisherman."

"Yes," said the first swallow, "and now they have started out to seek their fortunes. Isn't that good news?"

"Good news, indeed," answered the second swallow.

IV

All this while the children were sitting on the bench and listening.

"Only hear what the swallows are saying," said Doris.

"Oh, I am so glad that we learned the birds' language," whispered Dora.

There was now a great chattering among the birds, and the children listened very intently.

"I hope the little prince and his sister will find their father, the king," said a third swallow, who was building a new nest.

"Then they can set their mother free," said another.

"That will not be so easy a matter," said the first swallow. "They must first prove that they are really the king's children. And how can that be done?"

"Well," said the second swallow, "if they could only get the Bird of Truth to help them, they could expose the wicked nobles and show the king how he had been imposed upon."

"Yes, yes," sighed the second

swallow; "but who knows where the Bird of Truth can be found?"

"Mrs. Robin Redbreast knows," said the third swallow. "Let us call on her and find out."

So the whole company of swallows left their nests under the eaves and

flew to a tree which stood quite near to the spot where the children were

sitting. Mrs. Robin Redbreast was there, sitting on her four blue eggs.

"Well, my good neighbors," she said, "what can I do for you this fine evening?"

"We have heard of the Bird of Truth," said the first swallow, "and we have come to ask you where it is."

"I will tell you," said Mrs. Robin Redbreast. "It is shut up in the castle of Come-and-never-go, and it is guarded by a fierce giant who sleeps only one quarter of an hour in the whole twenty-four."

"And where is this castle of Come-and-never-go?" asked the second swallow.

"I am sure I don't know," answered

Mrs. Robin Redbreast; "but there is an old woman in the green tower at the top of the witch's hill who knows. She hates the Bird of Truth, and would kill him if she could. The young prince must be very wise and brave if he will learn anything from her."

"And is there no one else that can help him?" asked the second swallow.

"Only an old owl that lives by himself in a dead oak tree close by the castle," said Mrs. Robin Redbreast; "and the only word he can speak is 'cross.' But see the sun is almost down. Good night, my friends, good night."

The swallows flew back to their

nests, and Mrs. Robin Redbreast settled herself upon her blue eggs.

V

Doris and Dora hurried on. They remembered what Mrs. Robin Redbreast had said about an old woman who lived in a green tower at the top of the witch's hill, and they thought they might reach the place before dark.

The way was steep and rough, and they were so tired that they could hardly drag themselves along. At last, however, they saw a small house nestled among the lonely rocks.

"This is not the witch's hill. This is not the green tower," said Doris. For he saw a kind-faced

woman standing in the door and smiling in a very friendly way.

"Come in, children," she said. "Come in; for it is late for such as you to be wandering over these hills."

They went in, and the kind woman gave them a fine warm supper; and when they had rested she showed them soft beds to sleep upon.

The next morning they were up early. Dora swept the rooms, and Doris watered the garden. When the kind woman came downstairs, she found there was but little for her to do.

"Stay and live with me," she said, "for I love you."

"My sister will stay with you," said Doris; "but as for me, I have important business to look after, and I must be going."

So he bade Dora good-by. "Be brave, dear sister," he said. "When I have found the Bird of Truth, I will come for you."

"Good-by, dear brother," said Dora; and she went into the house and wept for him all day.

VI

It was many days before Doris found the witch's hill and the little green tower at the top of it. At last he came to the tower just as the sun was setting. He knocked at the door three times.

An old, old woman opened it.

"What do you want?" she cried. And Doris saw a great crowd of toads and grasshoppers and other ugly little things hopping around her.

"Madam," said the boy, "I have heard that you alone know the way to the castle of Come-and-never-go. Please tell me where it is."

"And if I do so, what will you do to pay me?" asked the woman.

"I will do anything that is right," answered Doris.

"Then bring me this jar full of water from the many-colored fountain in the courtyard of the castle. If you fail, I will change you into a lizard."

"I will bring it," said Doris.

Then the old woman called to her dog and said, "Here, Rover, take this child to the castle of Come-and-never-go."

The dog trotted off down the narrow path, and Doris ran after it. The sun had gone down, and the full moon was shining in the east.

Two hours later the dog stopped under an old oak whose dead branches seemed to be reaching up toward the moon.

Doris then saw right before him a dark castle with great square towers dimly lighted with candles. The wide gate was open, and no guards were to be seen.

"Is this the castle of Come-and-never-go?" asked Doris, not knowing whom he was speaking to.

"Cross! cross!" answered a voice.

Doris heard it with joy; for he knew it was the wise owl of which Mrs. Robin Redbreast had spoken.

"Oh, friendly Owl," he said, "help me, for I have come in search of the

Bird of Truth. But I must first fill this jar with water from the many-colored fountain in the courtyard of of the castle."

"Don't do that," said the owl. "Fill it from the crystal fountain on the other side. Then go into the bird house which is close by, and pick up the Bird of Truth. Choose only a small white bird that is hidden in the corner, and have nothing to do with the others that are there. But be quick about it; for the giant has just fallen asleep, and you have only fourteen minutes in which to do everything."

Doris waited no longer. He ran forward through the great gate. He

came into the courtyard where there were two beautiful fountains. He passed by the one which spouted water of many colors, and filled his jar at the other, which was clear as crystal.

Then he hastened into a cagelike house which he saw close by. It was full of all kinds of birds, both great and small; and as soon as he entered, each began to call out, "I am the Bird of Truth. Take me!"

There were peacocks and ravens and cranes and crows, and many an ugly vulture; and every one claimed to be the Bird of Truth.

The boy walked past them all, and chose a small white bird that was

cowering in a corner and trying to escape from some fierce crows that were worrying it. He picked her up and put her in his bosom, while all the other birds set up a cry of rage and disappointment.

Then he ran out of the castle and away over the hills to the little green tower where the old woman dwelt.

"I have come

to redeem my promise," he said; and he gave her the jar of water.

"Become a parrot!" she cried; and she flung the water over him.

But instead of losing his shape, he became ten times handsomer. For the water had been taken from the crystal fountain instead of the many-colored; and it was therefore enchanted for good instead of for evil.

At the same time, all the toads and grasshoppers that were in the castle were changed back to their own forms of men and women; for the old woman had given them these forms through her enchantments.

When the old witch woman saw

the mistake she had made, she took a broomstick and flew away, and was never seen again.

VII

Think how glad little Dora was when her brother came back to her with the Bird of Truth nestled in his bosom!

"Now," said he, "we will go and find our dear father and rescue our dear mother."

So, without telling any one about themselves, they went on till they came to the great city of the king and saw their father's white palace glittering in the sunlight.

In a humble little house beneath the walls they found lodgings, and

waited to see what it was best to be done.

Soon it was whispered around that the Bird of Truth was in the city — that she was even trying to get into the palace.

The wicked nobles were much alarmed. They got together all the weapons they could find — some of them poisoned and some sharpened with steel. They sent out eagles and vultures to hunt for the Bird of Truth. They built traps in which to catch her, and strong prison houses in which to lock her up.

Soon the news came to the ears of the king. "Who knows anything about this Bird of Truth?" he said.

"If any one has such a bird, let him bring it to me at once." And he caused a notice to be printed and set up at the castle gate, saying the same thing.

"Now, sister," said Doris, "we shall soon see our dear father."

So with the bird buttoned inside of his blouse, he hastened to the palace, leading Dora by the hand.

At the gate, the nobles met him and told him that he could not enter.

"I am only obeying the king's commands," said Doris.

"But the king is asleep, and he must not be disturbed," said the nobles.

Suddenly the bird leaped out from beneath the boy's blouse and flew upward to the king's window, which was open. She flew in and alighted on his hand.

"Great King," she said, "I am the Bird of Truth whom you wished to see. I have been obliged to come through your window because the boy who was bringing me has been ordered away by your nobles."

"They shall suffer for their insolence," said the king.

Then he told one of his servants to bring the boy into the palace.

Soon Doris came in, leading his sister by the hand. The king wondered greatly when he saw the two beautiful children before him.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"The Bird of Truth will tell you," said Doris.

Then the Bird of Truth, sitting on the king's hand, told the whole story from beginning to end. The king listened with tears in his eyes; and when the tale was finished, he took the children in his arms and blessed them.

Immediately he hurried away to the dark castle beyond the smoky mountains, and there he found the queen in the prison which the wicked nobles had made for her. She was pale, very pale; but when she saw her husband and her children, the color came to her cheeks and she was as beautiful as ever.

Then all returned joyfully to the white palace in the great city. The wicked nobles were seized and shut up in the prison where the queen had suffered so long. But the kind fisherman who had saved the two babes was rewarded with money and lands and a fine big house where there was plenty of room for all his children and grandchildren.

THE THREE TASKS

A FAIRY TALE OF HUNGARY

I

Once upon a time there was a man who had three fine-looking sons. But he was so poor that he could hardly find food for them to eat.

At last when they were almost grown up, he told them that they must go out into the world and each take care of himself.

The three boys were soon ready to go. Their mother gave each of them a loaf of bread and a farewell kiss; and their father gave them his blessing.

Now the two eldest boys, for all

their good looks, were unkind and selfish; and they were jealous of the youngest lad because his loaf was the largest.

But this lad, whose name was Marco, was gentle and loving, and never thought of doing harm to anything. His eyes were blue, his hair was golden, and he was straight and tall like a king's son.

At noon on the first day of their journey the three sat down under a tree to rest.

The sun was hot and they were very tired. Soon Marco was sound asleep.

Then the eldest brother said, "Let us eat up his loaf, and hear him cry when he wakes."

"Agreed," said the second brother, "and with all his crying, he shall not have a crumb of mine."

So they ate Marco's loaf while he slept.

When he awoke, he was very hungry

and reached into his wallet for his loaf.

His brothers laughed.

"What are you looking for?" they asked. "You must have eaten your bread in your sleep. You shall not get a crumb from us."

Marco could not understand how he could have eaten his bread without knowing it. But he said nothing, and went on with his brothers.

All that day and the next he went without a bite to eat. In the evening he was so weak and faint that he could hardly stand.

Then he asked his brothers to give him a few crumbs; but they said, "We have not enough for ourselves."

They went on a little farther till they came to a dark wood by the edge of a steep cliff.

"There is plenty to eat in this wood," said the eldest brother. "Go and find it."

Marco went into the wood, hoping to find a few berries or some ripe nuts.

But night came on and he could not see which way to go. Suddenly, in the darkness, he stumbled over the edge of the cliff. He fell down, down, through tree tops and brushwood, a hundred feet or more.

He was bruised and lamed by the fall. His eyes were so torn by the branches and brushes that he could not see. He lay groaning on the rocks at the foot of the cliff.

He could hear his brothers laugh-

ing above him. "Let us go and leave him," they said. "Then we shall have no more trouble with him."

II

Marco lay helpless upon the rocks. He called loudly for help, but no one answered. Between pain and hunger he thought he would die.

After a while the moon rose, but he could not see it. He heard the murmur of a little brook, and crawled toward it.

All at once he heard voices in a tree above him. Two ravens were talking to each other, and Marco understood them.

"Brother," said one, "is there anything strange in these woods?"

"Oh, yes," was the answer. "There are many strange things here that are not found elsewhere.

"Tell me about them."

"Well, at the foot of the hill there is a lake which is full of healing water. No matter how badly any one is hurt, he will be cured in a moment if he only bathes in it."

"How very strange! What else?"

"Do you see the grass in the meadow below us? Well, even though you were blind, if you should wash your eyes in the dew that is on this grass, you would become as sharp-sighted as an eagle."

"How strange! What else?"

"On the shore of the lake there are some bushes with golden fruit upon them. A little of this fruit is food enough for many days, and will give one the strength of a giant."

"How very strange! Let us go and see." And with that the two birds flew away.

With great pain Marco dragged himself down to the grassy hillside.

The dew was on the grass, and he washed his face and eyes in it.

He looked up. He could see

everything around him as plainly as in the daylight.

Very slowly he crawled onward to the shore of the lake. He bathed himself in the water. In a moment his bruises were healed and he felt as strong and as well as ever.

He arose and walked. He saw the bushes with the golden fruit. He gathered some of it and ate. He never felt so well in his life.

He filled a bottle with the healing water. He put some of the golden fruit in his pockets. Then he went on his way, strong and hopeful.

III

Marco had not gone far when he met a wolf. The animal was limping along on three legs, for the fourth had been broken.

He looked up at Marco and began to howl.

"Never mind," said the boy. "I will help you."

He poured some of the water on

the broken leg. In a minute the wolf was frisking around, as sound and as well as ever.

"Thank you," he said. "I will do you a good turn some day."

Marco went on till he came to a field that had just been plowed. In a deep furrow he saw a field mouse creeping along with its hind legs. Its forefeet had been crushed by the plow.

"Poor little thing," said Marco.

He picked it up and washed its paws with the healing water. In a minute the mouse was as sound and well as ever. As it ran to its nest under a great stone, it cried out: "Thank you, good sir. I will do you a good turn some day."

As Marco was going through the field, a queen bee alighted on the sleeve of his coat. He saw that one of her wings was broken so that she could not rise again.

"Wait a minute," he said. "I will help you."

He poured a drop of the healing water on the broken wing, and the queen bee was cured at once. She flew away buzzing: "Thank you. I will do you a good turn some day."

So he went on and on, for many and many a mile; and whenever he saw anything in trouble, he stopped and kindly gave such help as was needed.

At last, after a long time, he

reached a strange country that was ruled by a king. He went at once to the king's palace to see if there was anything there that he could do.

As he went into the courtyard, whom do you think he saw?

He saw his two brothers who had treated him so badly. They had found work to do in the palace and were standing with the king's guards.

"See there!" whispered the eldest. "I thought that he was lost in the forest."

"And so did I," said the other. "We shall now have to look out for ourselves."

Marco greeted them kindly and then went in and stood before the

king. The lad was so tall and handsome that everybody looked at him and wondered.

The king himself was much pleased, and told Marco to come again the next day and he would have good news for him.

He had hardly left the palace when the brothers went forward and said: "Let your Majesty beware of that fellow. We know him. He is a wicked magician and has come here to do you harm."

IV

The next day Marco came back and stood before the king.

"Well, my bold fellow," said the king, "I told you that I would

have some news for you, and so I have.

"I have heard that you are a magician. If you can do three tasks which I shall name, I will reward you. But if you fail to do either of them, you shall be put in my darkest prison for the rest of your life."

Then he turned to the eldest of the

brothers and said, "What shall be the first task that he must do?"

The brother answered, "Bid him build you a finer palace than this you are now in."

This pleased the king, and he said to Marco: "This is your task, and early to-morrow morning you shall begin it."

The poor lad was in great distress. How could he build a palace? He did not know what to do or say.

He went out into the king's garden and wept.

While he was weeping, he heard a buzzing sound close by his ear. He looked and saw the queen bee.

"What is the matter, my kind friend?" she asked.

"Oh, I am ruined," said Marco. "To-morrow I must build a palace more beautiful than the king's."

"Is that all?" said the queen bee. "Then trust it to me. Wait here to-morrow till I bring you word, and the king shall have a more beautiful palace than he has ever seen."

The next morning Marco went into the garden and waited for the queen bee. He waited until noon.

He waited until the sun was almost down. Then the queen bee came and buzzed in his ear.

"It is finished," she said. "Lead the king over the hill just outside of the city gate."

Marco went in and stood before the

king. "May it please your Majesty," he said, "the palace is finished."

The king and all his court went out to look at it. No person had ever seen so beautiful a palace.

It was made of flowers.

The roof was of roses; the windows were of lilies; the walls were of daisies; the floors were of violets. Every door was a red tulip, and the door knockers were sunflowers. The tables and chairs, the sofas and beds, were all made of flowers.

"Well! well!" cried the king, "you have done your task, and no mistake."

He did not know that the queen bee, with all the bees in his kingdom, had built this beautiful palace.

"We will set the young magician a still harder task," he said. "But what shall it be?"

The eldest brother heard him and said: "Let him gather all the corn that is in your kingdom and put it in one pile before to-morrow night."

"That is good," answered the king, "and it shall be done."

V

Marco sat down on the ground and wept. "It cannot be done! It cannot be done!" he said.

All at once he saw something moving at his feet. It was the field mouse he had befriended.

"What is the matter now?" asked the mouse.

Marco told him.

"Oh, is that all?" said the mouse. "Then it shall be done. Just leave it to me;" and the little fellow scampered away.

Marco dried his tears, for he felt sure that the field mouse would do as it said. He lay down on the ground and slept till morning. Then he sat still and waited and waited.

At sunset the mouse came to him.

"It is finished," said the little creature. "Tell the king to come to the field on the other side of the pine grove and see it."

Marco did so, and the king went out to see the great wonder. There,

sure enough, was a pile of corn that reached almost to the stars. Every grain in the kingdom was there.

"Well! well!" cried the king. "You have done your second task, and no mistake."

He did not know that the field mouse, with the help of every other mouse, had brought the corn together.

"I should like to know if the young magician can do anything harder than that," the king said.

The eldest brother heard him and said: "I think I can name something that he cannot do. Let him bring all the wolves to this town before to-morrow night."

"Good! good!" said the king.

It so happened that the king's daughter, Princess Mayblossom, heard these words, and they made her very sad. For she had seen young Marco, and thought he was the handsomest and bravest young man in the world.

She burst into tears and begged her father not to give him that task. "The wolves are very fierce, and they will eat him up," she cried.

But the king laughed, and when she would not keep quiet, he shut her up in a dark tower.

VI

After it had begun to grow dark, Marco went out into a little grove and sat down by a tree. All at

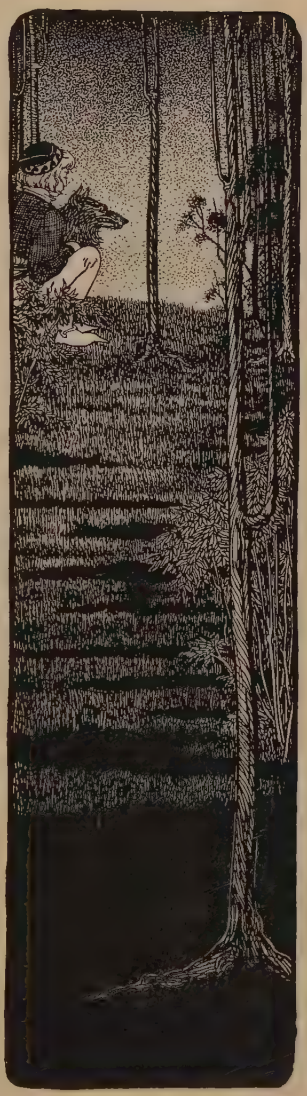
once he heard a voice at his side, "Good evening, master!"

He looked. The wolf he had befriended was standing there.

"What are you thinking about in this lonely place?" asked the wolf.

Marco told him about the third task that he was bidden to do.

"Oh, is that all?" said the wolf. "Then be brave and leave



everything to me;" and he scampered away.

Just before sunset the wolf came running to Marco and said, "I have brought with me all the wolves from all the woods. Tell the king to come to the top of the hill and see us."

"I will do so," said Marco; "but I pray you will not harm my brothers."

"They do not deserve to be spared," said the king wolf; "yet for your sake I will try to save them."

Then Marco went to the palace and said: "May it please your Majesty, the wolves are here."

The king and his court hurried out to the top of the hill.

What a sight met their eyes!

Out of the woods came thousands and thousands of fierce wolves with their mouths open. And in front of them all was the king wolf whom Marco had befriended.

"Oh, send them back!" cried the king. "Drive them away!"

"Go back! Go back!" cried Marco; but it was

too late. The wolves fell upon the king and the men who were with him, and although Marco tried his best to save them, he could not.

Marco was very sad, but he said to himself, "Did they not bring all this upon themselves? Did they not bid me bring the wolves?"

Then he went to the palace and unlocked the door of the tower and set the Princess Mayblossom free.

And all the people cried: "Marco must be our king. Marco must be our king."

So he was crowned. And some time after that he married the Princess Mayblossom, and the two lived happily together forever afterward.

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